



The ACE Project *Alternative to Care Evaluation*

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/CARERS

What is the ACE project?

The ACE project is a way of finding out if Safe Families for Children works. Safe Families can help in 3 ways: by looking after children overnight, offering friendship to parents/carers and helping with basic goods and services. The project is really interested in hearing from families whose children are looked after overnight. To do this, people from the Dartington Social Research Unit (DSRU) want to ask lots of families some questions. By taking part, you could help more families receive support in the future.

How will the evaluation work?

The ACE project will use something called a randomised controlled trial (RCT). This is one of the best ways to find out if something works or not.

Services you receive and changes at home or school can impact a family's circumstances. For this reason we must ask the same questions to parents/carers who get help from Safe Families and similar parent/carers who get help from elsewhere.

As we don't know which support works best, the fairest way to decide who gets which support, is by random allocation. This is a bit like flipping a coin, with a 50:50 chance of being in either group, but it's done using a computer.

Whichever group a family ends up in, the parent/carers can access any other help or services available to them.

What do I need to know?

- We would like to ask you some questions about yourself and your child(ren) when you first meet with Safe Families and again around 8 weeks later.
- The questions will be on a tablet or laptop. Your answers will be sent to us straight away so the person who visits you won't be able to read them once you have finished.
- The first thing you will be asked on the computer screen is to give consent. This means that you understand what the project involves and you're happy to be a part of it.
- After you have completed the questions for the first time, your family will be randomly allocated to either the Safe Families group or the comparison group.
- Whichever group you are in, someone will let you know, as soon as possible, what support you will receive.
- When around 8 weeks have passed, Safe Families or a researcher from the DSRU will visit you to ask the questions for a second time.
- Both groups are important to the ACE project!

The Dartington Social Research Unit (DSRU)

The ACE project is being run by DSRU – a charity that wants to see what works in improving outcomes for children. DSRU has lots of experience running similar projects.

Working on the ACE project are: Dr. Michael Little (Co-Principal Investigator), Dr. Georgina Warner (Co-Principal Investigator) and Ms. Natasha Mokhtar (Project Coordinator).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is it fair that only some families will receive support from Safe Families for Children?

It is only unfair if it is **certain** the families that receive support from Safe Families will be better off than the families who do not. While Safe Families are confident they have a positive impact, there is currently no conclusive evidence to support this. This is why the ACE project is so important.

Why is it random? Can't I choose which group my family goes into?

Random allocation helps to ensure the two groups are as similar as possible from the start. This way, if there is any difference between the groups at the end, it is reasonable to say this was the result of Safe Families. Both groups are equally important to the ACE project.

What questions will I be asked?

Whichever group your family ends up in the you will be asked the same questions. You will be asked how much you agree with statements like:

I am as good at doing things as most other people are.

I can laugh and see the funny side of things.

You will also be asked how true certain statements are about your child(ren) for example:

Helpful if someone is hurt, upset, or feeling ill.

Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long.

How long will the questions take?

Not long! All parents/carers involved in the ACE project will be asked to complete some questions at the beginning of the study and around 8 weeks later. The questions will take around 10-15 minutes, possibly a bit longer if you have more than one child.

Do I have to take part?

No. Participation is voluntary. However, if you decline to take part in the ACE project, Safe Families may not be able to offer you support; any support provided outside of the project is at their discretion. If you agree to take part, you will be able to stop any time even once the project has begun. Any information already collected can be withdrawn, upon request to DSRU, up until March 2016.

Do I receive anything for taking part?

Not only will you be contributing to a hugely valuable project, all families will receive a shopping voucher to the value of £10 at the second visit.

Will my information be safe?

Yes. When you're involved in the project, the DSRU and Safe Families will not share the things you talk about with anyone else. All of your information will be protected under the Data Protection Act 1998. Your personal information will not appear on any datasets or reports and will be kept separate in password-protected folders or locked cabinets. Your information will be destroyed after five years.

Just so you know...

If you tell us something that makes us think there is a serious risk to you, your child(ren) or the safety of others, then we are legally obliged, like all organisations, to notify other professionals so that you and your child(ren) can be kept safe. This would include involving child protection services if it concerns your child(ren), other child(ren), or you, if you are under 18.

ACE project Contacts

Ms. Natasha Mokhtar
(Project Coordinator)
nmokhtar@dartington.org.uk
020 3701 7320

Dr. Georgina Warner
(Co-Principal Investigator)
gwarner@dartington.org.uk
020 3701 7320

ACE project website
www.dartington.org.uk/projects/ace

Safe Families for Children Office Contacts

Manchester - 0161 4135 130

Merseyside - 0151 334 4473

North East - 0191 374 4777

West Midlands - 0121 740 0237

Safe Families for Children
www.safefamiliesforchildren.com



DARTINGTON
SOCIAL
RESEARCH
UNIT